

Romans 4:9-12 – BC Article 33 – “Signs and Seals of Righteousness”

Introduction: **Because we are God’s righteous people by faith, we receive seals of that righteousness in the sacraments.**

1. Receiving Righteousness

- At the beginning of our text we are introduced to a blessing, one which David speaks of in Psalm 32, that God gives forgiveness of sins apart from works. This is what Paul has been discussing at the beginning of Romans, that no one is righteous. However, by faith a man can be righteous.
- This is the same declaration that the sacraments make. They proclaim that salvation is offered through the cleansing of Christ. The word is the primary means of creating this faith, and this is why the sacraments must be used alongside the word. They both have the same substance, Christ, and speak the same Gospel message.
- Abraham is an example of this righteousness by faith. In Genesis 15 we read that he believed God and was counted righteous because of that fact. However, as our text notes, he didn’t receive the sacrament of circumcision until Genesis 17. The point is that it was while Abraham was a Gentile that he received the promises, and it was while uncircumcised that he believed and was declared righteous.

2. Receiving the Sign

- Instead, Abraham is the father of all, both circumcised and uncircumcised, who have faith. Abraham was given circumcision as a sign and seal of righteousness by faith. In the New Testament era we have two such sacraments, Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. These were instituted by Christ himself.
- These are signs and seals. A **sign** points to something other than itself, and the sacraments point to the gospel. A **seal** confirms the value and authenticity of the promise. For Abraham, circumcision declared and confirmed the righteousness that he had by faith. Notably, this was not only for him, but also for his children. Thus, the New Testament sacrament of Baptism, which declares the same, is rightfully given to children as well.